

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Resentment can take root quietly in family recovery. A broken promise, another relapse, financial loss, years of instability, or words spoken in anger can remain active in us long after the moment has passed. We may tell ourselves that holding onto anger keeps us alert or protects us from being hurt again. Yet resentment can keep our emotional life tied to the very person or situation from which we are trying to find freedom.

This Sunday's first reading puts this plainly: "*Wrath and anger are hateful things, yet the sinner hugs them tight*" (Sirach 27:30). That image captures how resentment can become familiar. We replay old injuries, rehearse what someone should have done, and imagine the apology or change that would finally make things right. Meanwhile, our peace remains dependent on another person doing something we cannot control.

Peter asks Jesus in Sunday's gospel, "*Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive him? As many as seven times?*" Jesus answers, "*I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times*" (Matthew 18:21–22). He then tells the parable of a servant who receives extraordinary mercy but refuses to extend mercy to someone who owes him far less.

For family members and friends, forgiveness can be complicated. The harm connected to addiction may be real and repeated. Trust may have been broken many times. Forgiveness does not require us to deny that harm, remove a boundary, restore trust before it has been rebuilt, or continue participating in unsafe behavior. Reconciliation requires honesty and change from both people. Forgiveness can begin even when the other person is unwilling to do either.

This distinction matters because some of us have confused forgiveness with returning immediately to the way things

were. Others have used anger as a way of maintaining distance and control. Family recovery offers another path. We can acknowledge what happened, grieve what was lost, protect what needs protecting, and still ask God to loosen resentment's hold on our hearts.

Sometimes the debt we are carrying is not only what another person did, but what we believe they still owe us: an apology, sobriety, gratitude, understanding, or the family life we hoped to have. These desires are understandable. Yet when our peace depends on receiving them, we remain bound to an outcome outside our control. Forgiveness asks us to place that debt in God's hands.

Saint Paul reminds us in the second reading, "*None of us lives for oneself, and no one dies for oneself*" (Romans 14:7). Resentment affects more than the relationship where it began. It can spill into our parenting, friendships, prayer, and ability to be present. Releasing resentment creates room for God to restore parts of our lives that addiction has occupied for too long.

Forgiveness may need to be renewed many times. A memory resurfaces, another disappointment occurs, or an old wound is touched. We can return the debt to God again without pretending that trust has been restored or boundaries are no longer needed. We may also need to examine our own side of the street, acknowledging where fear, control, resentment, or unhealthy reactions have caused harm. This does not make us responsible for another person's addiction. It keeps our recovery rooted in honesty.

Jesus does not ask us to call evil good. He asks us to refuse resentment the final word. We can love someone, pray for

them, maintain appropriate distance, and allow God to handle what belongs to Him. Forgiveness becomes part of our own recovery because it frees us to live in the present instead of remaining chained to what someone else has done.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What debt do you still feel that someone you love owes you, and how has waiting for repayment affected your peace?
- Where might you be confusing forgiveness with restored trust, reconciliation, or removing a necessary boundary?
- What resentment can you place in God's hands while remaining honest about what belongs to you and what does not?

MASS READINGS

FIRST READING Sirach 27:30—28:7

RESP. PS. Psalm 103:1–2, 3–4, 9–10, 11–12

SECOND READING Romans 14:7–9

GOSPEL Matthew 18:21–35